

opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Lingüística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 36, 2020, Especial N°

26

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas
Maracaibo - Venezuela

Hyperbole in poetry: A case study of exaggeration

Manal Jasim Muhammad

Department of English. College of Education for Humanities/Bin
Rushed/University of Baghdad

Abstract

The present study identifies the linguistic means used to realize hyperbole in poetry as a rhetorical device that makes readers experience the beauty of poetic language. To achieve the aim of the study, a model of analysis in accordance with Spitzbardt (1963), Norrick (1982), and McCarthy & Carter (2004) is used. The analysis of data under investigation reveals that hyperbole is a crucial aid used by poets to portrait the real world as imaginative. In conclusion, poets prefer using lexico-grammatical repertoires than lexico-grammatical configurations.

Keywords: Hyperbole, Exaggeration, Overstatement, Extremity, Statement.

Hipérbole en poesía: un estudio de caso de exageración

Resumen

El presente estudio identifica los medios lingüísticos utilizados para realizar la hipérbole en la poesía como un dispositivo retórico que hace que los lectores experimenten la belleza del lenguaje poético. Para lograr el objetivo del estudio, se utiliza un modelo de análisis de acuerdo con Spitzbardt (1963), Norrick (1982) y McCarthy y Carter (2004). El análisis de los datos investigados revela que la hipérbole es una ayuda crucial utilizada por los poetas para representar el mundo real como imaginativo. En conclusión, los poetas prefieren usar repertorios lexico-gramaticales que las configuraciones lexico-gramaticales.

Palabras clave: Hipérbole, Exageración, Exageración, Extremidad, Declaración.

1. INTRODUCTION

Poets use rhetorical devices like hyperbole to create a language that pleases the senses. This kind of language serves an aesthetic function that adds to the meaning of the text. Rhetorical devices are not only used to beautify the language; they are indispensable aids in any successful writing. Effective speech and writing are scarcely possible without such devices.

Hyperbole is one of these rhetorical devices that cannot be avoided since it enters into the very fabric of thought. Hyperbole is defined as an exaggerated linguistic form that either magnifies or minimizes some real states of affairs to create an emotional response in the audience (FAULKNER, 1977). It represents things as being greater or less, better or worse than what they really are. Its origin comes from the Greek word (hyper which means extreme or beyond extreme. As a kind of poetic device, hyperbole might be confused with other figures of speech like simile and metaphor. This is due to the fact that these devices are used to compare two objects. The only difference among them is that hyperbole is an overstatement. English rhetoricians have exerted tremendous effort in analyzing and classifying each difference between these devices. Hyperbole can be traced back to Greek and Roman times. Roman rhetoricians extensively studied it as they used it in many types of writings like poetry, fairy tales, rhetoric, and advertisement. Since then hyperbole has been a subject of research in the European tradition (MCCARTHY & CARTER, 2004).

In addition, hyperbole is not only a figure of speech similar to metaphor; still, it is one of the most common features of everyday language use. It is part of human experiences, i.e., how they experience or understand the world. As humans are prone to maximize or minimize things and no one sticks to descriptions of things as they really are. Thus, the presence of hyperbole in everyday use of language is not really a surprise. All of us need exaggeration to some extent, yet others go beyond extreme to falsehood and lying. Many of us use such statements, it rains dogs and cats, and she is so light that air could have blown her (LEECH, 2016). It is obvious that these statements are false, yet speakers use them to make listeners impressive and get the required reaction. However, speakers should keep the use of exaggeration within reasonable limits in ordinary speech and writing (KREUZ & ROBERTS, 1995).

It should be noted here that some linguists classify Hyperbole as an important device of Stylistics in that it can be employed to express various meanings like excitement, compliments, complaint, emphasis, humor, etc. By comparison, other linguists see it as unnecessary bloating of language. It is the reader or listener who decides whether hyperbole is an effective stylistic device or merely an aid used by speakers to float language to achieve specific purposes (LAKOFF & JOHNSON, 1980).

Researchers of figurative language agree it is the nature of people to use figures of speech or manipulating with words in speaking and writing. Since they believe that such non-literal use of language

can perform various shades of meanings that cannot be fulfilled in literal language, e.g. to express hate in a lovely and witty way. Accordingly, the real advantage of using figurative language warrants the greater risk of misunderstanding that speakers undertake when they speak indirectly (COLSTON & BRIEN, 2000).

There are other pros of using non-literal forms in comparison to literal ones in that the uses of such devices give a great chance to speakers to answer many discourse goals. Many linguists have exerted tremendous research in this area and they come up with the conclusion that a literal and non-literal use of language can fulfill similar functions; still, the effect or reaction accomplished by non-literal language is much greater and more successful than literal one (KREUZ, KASSLER & COPPENRATH, 1998). One could say that the relationship between non-literal use of language and the required effects is a little bit complex as various discourse claims can be satisfied by several rhetorical tropes, yet the use of some tropes than others will be much better to reach the required effects (Aghaei et al, 2015).

Poets use different linguistic means (lexical and grammatical) to realize hyperbole. CRYSTAL & DAVY (2016) exert a significant effort to list the means used to express hyperbole. They classify them into lexico-grammatical repertoires and lexico-grammatical configurations. They list them in a taxonomy which includes hyperbolic Numbers, Major word classes that have the sense of exaggeration (nouns, verbs, adjectives, intensifying adverbs), Simile

and Metaphor, Comparative and Superlative degrees, Emphatic genitive and Emphatic plural, and whole sentences or clause. In addition, they confirm that function words are also used to express exaggeration like Prepositions, Quantifiers, Idioms, Polysyndetic structures and Complex modification (GIBBS, GIBBS & GIBBS, 1994).

2. METHODOLOGY

As a literary device, hyperbole can be found in literature and everyday use of language. The poets' imagination exceeds all limits. It is this world where the impossible becomes possible, dead become alive, and rational thinking becomes irrational. This is linguistically possible through the use of a wonder trope which is called hyperbole. It should be noted here that hyperboles in sentences or paragraphs of any piece of writing may be moderately used but in poetry it reaches to immeasurable degrees, giving the poets freedom to run through the stanzas with greater intensity. The data of the present paper consists of twenty-one stanzas selected from eight poems as indicated below. below are the lexico-grammatical repertoire and lexico-grammatical configuration for Hyperbole in the data selected (LEVINSON, 1983).

Table 1: The lexico-grammatical repertoires and a lexico-grammatical configuration for Hyperbole in the data selected

The Poem	Stanz a. NO	The stanza example	Realization of Hyperbole	The Poet's intention
To His Coy Mistress by Andrew Marvell,	1	Of Humber would complain. I would Love you ten years before the Flood; And you should, if you please, refuse Till the conversion of the Jews. My vegetable love should grow Vaster than empires, and more slow. An hundred years should go to praise Thine eyes, and on thy forehead gaze; Two hundred to adore each breast, But thirty thousand to the rest; An age at least to every part, And the last age should show your heart. For lady, you deserve this state, Nor would I love at lower rate. But at my back I always hear <u>Time's winged chariot</u> hurrying near; And yonder all before us lie Deserts of vast eternity.	Whole sentence with a time expression Prepositional phrase Hyperbolic adjective (intensity) and verb used hyperbolically Comparative degrees Numerical hyperbole (amount) Complex clause (concession) used with Numerical hyperbole (amount) Nouns of hyperbolic nature Whole sentence with hyperbolic adjective (intensity) Adjective used hyperbolically (intensity)	Marvell provides terrific examples of Hyperbole in this poem which is considered a masterly work after his death. Through the use of hyperbole, the words appear to be a synonym for lady or sweetheart.
	2			
The Passions, An Ode to Music by William Collins	1	With eyes up-raised, as one inspired, Pale Melancholy sat retired; And from her wild sequestered seat, In notes, by distance made more sweet, Poured through the mellow horn	Simile Adjectives of hyperbolic nature complex Modification	The poet creates a strong influence on his readers by using such hyperbolic

		<p>her pensive soul; And, dashing soft from rocks around, Bubbling runnels joined the sound; Through glades and glooms the mingled measure stole, Or, o'er some haunted stream, with fond delay, Round an holy calm diffusing, Love of Peace, and lonely musing, In hollow murmurs died away.</p>	<p>comparative degree</p> <p>Adjective used hyperbolically</p> <p>Adjective used hyperbolically</p> <p>A whole sentence with a verb used hyperbolically</p> <p>Adjectives used hyperbolically</p> <p>Complex modification</p> <p>Adjective used hyperbolically Adjective and a verb used hyperbolically</p>	<p>linguistic means.</p>
<p>Concord Hymn Sung at the Completion of the Battle Monumen t, July 4, 1837. By: Ralph Waldo Emerson</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>By the rude bridge that arched the flood, Their flag to April's breeze unfurled, Here once the embattled farmers stood And fired the shot heard round the world</p> <p>The foe long since in silence slept; Alike the conqueror silent sleep; And Time the ruined bridge has swept Down the dark stream which seaward creeps?</p>	<p>Adjective as well as verb used hyperbolically</p> <p>A whole Sentence</p> <p>Whole sentence that has verbs used hyperbolically</p>	<p>Using Hyperbole helps the poet make heavy use of imagery structures and words that are associated to quickly convey emotions.</p>

<p>I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud By William Wordsworth</p>	1	<p>I wandered lonely as a cloud That floats on high o'er vales and hills When all at once I saw a crowd, A host, of golden daffodils; Beside the lake, beneath the trees, Fluttering and dancing in the breeze</p>	<p>Simile</p> <p>Hyperbolic adjective (intensity)</p>	<p>By employing hyperbolic structures in this poem, Wordsworth enable readers visualize the surroundings being described.</p>
	2	<p>Continuous as the stars that shine And twinkle on the milky way, They stretched in never-ending line Along the margin of a bay: Ten thousand saw at a glance, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance</p>	<p>Non-finite clause (ing participle construction)</p> <p>Hyperbolic adjectives & Simile</p>	
	3	<p>For oft, when on my couch I lie In vacant or in pensive mood, They flash upon that inward eye Which is the bliss of solitude; And then my heart with pleasure fills, And dances with the daffodils</p>	<p>Whole sentence</p> <p>Numerical hyperbole (amount)</p> <p>Non-finite clause (ing participial construction) used hyperbolically</p> <p>Hyperbolic adjectives (intensity)</p> <p>adjective used hyperbolically</p> <p>Verb of hyperbolic nature</p> <p>Whole sentence with a verb used hyperbolically</p>	

Kubla khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge	1	In Xanadu did Kubla khan A stately pleasure-dome decree Where Alph, the sacred river, ran Through caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea	Whole sentence Hyperbolic adjectives (intensity)	With hyperbole, Coleridge definitely intends to make readers experience the beauty of Kubla Khan.
	2	However, oh! That deep romantic chasm which slanted Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover! A savage place! As holy and enchanted As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted By woman wailing for her demon lover!	Complex modification Hyperbolic adjectives (intensity) Hyperbolic adjectives (intensity)	

<p>To Autumn By John Keats</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>Seasons of mists and mellow fruitfulness, Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun; Conspiring with him how to load and bless With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;</p> <p>To bend the apples, the moss'd cottage-trees, And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;</p> <p>To swell the ground, and plump the hazel shells With sweet kernels; to set budding more And still more, later flowers for the bees, Until they think warm days will never cease, For summer has o'er brimm'd their clammy cell.</p>	<p>Hyperbolic adjective (intensity) & noun used hyperbolically Hyperbolic adjective Non-finite clause (ing participial construction) used hyperbolically</p> <p>A quantifier used hyperbolically</p> <p>Non-finite clause (to infinitive) used hyperbolically</p>	<p>Through the use of hyperbole, Keats imagines Autumn as human, and he describes it as one of the best friends</p>
<p>She Walks in Beauty By: George Gordon Byron</p>	<p>1</p> <p>2</p>	<p>She walks in beauty, like the night Of cloudless climes and starry skies; And all that's best of dark bright Meet in her aspect and her eyes: Thus mellowed to that tender light Which heaven to gaudy day denies.</p> <p>One shade the more, one ray the less, Had half impaired the nameless grace Which waves in every raven trees, Or softly lightens o'er her face;</p>	<p>Simile Hyperbolic adjectives (intensity) & Emphatic plurals Superlative degree & complex modification</p> <p>Hyperbolic adjectives (intensity)</p> <p>Comparative degrees</p>	<p>Note how the poet amplifies reality to portrait a very nice imaginatio n of walks in beauty. He pushes us beyond the boundaries of reason or rational thought.</p>

	3	<p>..... Where thoughts serenely sweet express, And on that cheek, and o'er that brow, So soft, so clean, yet eloquent, The smiles that win, the tints that glow, But tell of days in goodness spent,</p>	<p>Hyperbolic adjective(intens ity) Quantifier & Hyperbolic adjective (intensity) Hyperbolic adverb (degree) Intensifiers & Hyperbolic adjective (intensity) Emphatic plurals</p>	
<p>As I Walked Out One Evening by W.H. Auden</p>	1	<p>I love you dear, I will love you Till China and Africa meet, And the river jumps over the mountain And the salmon sing in the street,</p>	<p>Whole sentences with verbs used hyperbolically</p>	<p>With Hyperbole, the poet reaches an immeasura ble degree to express his love to his mistress and being free to run through the stanzas with greater intensity to give the readers terrific examples of hyperboles.</p>
	2	<p>I love you till the ocean Is folded and hung up to dry And the seven stars go squawking Like geese about the sky.</p>	<p>Whole sentence with adjectives used Hyperbolically</p>	
	3	<p>The years shall run like rabbits For in my arms I hold The flower of the ages, In addition, the first love of the world.</p>	<p>Noun used hyperbolically Simile Simile</p>	
	4	<p>In the burrows of the Nightmare Where justice naked is, Time watches from the shadow In addition, cough when you would kiss.</p>	<p>A noun of hyperbolic nature Numerical hyperbole</p>	
	5	<p>In headaches and in worry Vaguely life leaks away, And Time will have his fancy Tomorrow or today.</p>	<p>Hyperbolic Adjective</p>	
	6	<p>The glacier knocks in the cupboard,</p>	<p>Whole sentence (coordinated clauses that have verbs used hyperbolically</p>	

		<p>The desert sighs in the bed, And the crack in the tea-cup opens A lane to the land of dead</p>	<p>Whole sentence with adjective and verb used hyperbolically Noun used hyperbolically</p> <p>Whole sentences with verbs used hyperbolically</p>	
--	--	---	--	--

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The analysis of the stanzas indicated above in the table reveals hyperbole as an important rhetorical figure that can be realized by employing various linguistic means, yet the means used are mostly lexical. Lexico-grammatical repertoires are the main aids used to give a sense of exaggeration. Adjectives, this word-class together with verbs used hyperbolically have been intensively identified in the literature. Hyperbolic adjectives are identified in (38) words (vast eternity, vegetable love golden daffodils, cloudless climes, starry skies, nameless grace, justice naked, mellow fruitfulness, maturing sun) together with whole sentences contain adjectives of hyperbolic nature like Deserts of vast eternity.

Likewise, Verbs that have hyperbolic nature are structured around (17) words (Africa meets, river jumps, Salmon sings, Time watches, The glacier knocks, The desert sighs, the ruined bridge has swept). Nouns of hyperbolic nature are identified in (6) words like the flower of the ages, and time will have his fancy) together with

Emphatic plurals (as it also represents the word class of noun) which are realized in (5) words (cloudless climes, starry skies, the smiles that win, the tints that glow in headaches). Adverbs of hyperbolic nature are represented in (1) intensifying adverb where thoughts serenely sweet express. Note that all the above-indicated words are hyperbolically used in poetry (SERT, 2008).

In addition, hyperbole is used in Numerical hyperbole which is structured in (4) phrases like (A hundred years should go to praise, Ten thousand saw at a glance,) and Time expressions identified in (1) a sentence which is Love you ten years before the Flood. One cannot overlook a fact that the trope is also used as basic one in comparative degrees which are identified in (5) structures (Vaster than empires, more slow, more sweet, One shade the more, one ray the less), Superlative degree identified in (1) a sample (And all that is best), Complex modifications appear in (4) structures (dark bright, deep romantic, a holy calm), and (1) prepositional phrase (Till the conversion of the Jews). Lexico-grammatical configurations are also manifested in the use of Quantifiers, which are manifested in (2) words (in every raven trees, and fill all fruit...), and (2) identified intensifiers (So soft, so clean).

Moreover, in the data analyzed, poets use Simile in (5) structures to achieve hyperbolic meanings as in (as a cloud, like the night, like rabbits, as the stars that shine. This explains that hyperbole is a simple and pure trope. It should be noted here that hyperbole is also constructed in whole sentences (simple and complex) and non-

finite clauses. Simple sentences identified in (5) (They stretched in never-ending line, A stately pleasure-dome decree) while complex sentence appears in (1) coordinated clause and (1) subordinated clause as indicated below

Time watches from the shadow

In addition, cough when you would kiss (coordination)

Two hundred to adore each breast,

But thirty thousand to the rest; (subordination, concession)

Non-finite clauses are identified in (4) constructions (participle and to-infinitive) (Fluttering and dancing in the breeze, Tossing their heads in sprightly dance, to swell the ground).

Table 2: Frequencies and Percentages of Hyperbolic items

Frequencies of hyperbolic items		
Hyperbolic items	Frequencies	Percentage
Hyperbolic Adjectives	38	38%
Verbs of hyperbolic nature	17	17%
Nouns of hyperbolic nature	6	6%
Emphatic plurals	5	5%
Numerical hyperbole	4	4%
Time expressions	1	1%

Comparative degrees	5	5%
Superlative degrees	1	1%
Complex modifications	4	4%
Simile	6	6%
Whole sentences (finite) Simple and complex	7	7%
Non-finite clauses	4	4%
Adverbs	1	1%
Prepositional phrase	1	1%
Total	100	100

4. CONCLUSION

Hyperbole is definitely a crucial and indispensable aid that enables poets to make readers experience the beauty of the world and achieve multiple discourse goals simultaneously. Poets upscale the real world when using such rhetorical figures. This explains the reasons behind the association of hyperbole with amplification rather than reduction. However, the over-exaggeration is not to be taken literally.

The analysis of the poems under study reveals that poets prefer using lexico-grammatical repertoires than lexico-grammatical configurations. This explains the reasons behind the frequent use of such linguistic means to realize hyperbole in the analyzed data. Adjective and verbs of hyperbolic nature are the most frequent linguistic means used in poetry. It also reveals hyperbole as simple and pure trope like simile and metaphor. In addition, the analyzed poems

really show how poets are talented in using words. To put it in another way poets use daily and common words to express beautiful ideas that bring readers to the world of imagination.

REFERENCES

- AGHAEI, H., JAFARI, S. S., & MEMARI, M. 2015. **Investigating the Relationship Between Intrapersonal Intelligence of EFL Learners and Their Critical Thinking**. *Research in Applied Linguistics*, 5(Special Issue): 18-25.
- COLSTON, H., & BRIEN, J. 2000. "Contrast of kind versus contrast of magnitude: The pragmatic accomplishments of irony and hyperbole". **Discourse Processes**. Vol. 30, N^o 2: 179-199. UK.
- CRYSTAL, D., & DAVY, D. 2016. **Investigating English style**. Routledge. UK.
- FAULKNER, P. 1977. "Modernism". **Taylor & Francis**. Vol. 35. UK.
- GIBBS, J., GIBBS, R., & GIBBS, J. 1994. The poetics of mind: Figurative thought, language, and understanding. **Cambridge University Press**. UK.
- KREUZ, R., & ROBERTS, R. 1993. "The empirical study of figurative language in literature". **Poetics**. Vol. 22, N^o 1-2: 151-169. UK.
- KREUZ, R., & ROBERTS, R. 1995. "Two cues for verbal irony: Hyperbole and the ironic tone of voice". **Metaphor and symbol**. Vol. 10, N^o 1: 21-31. UK.
- KREUZ, R., KASSLER, M., & COPPENRATH, L. 1998. **The use of exaggeration in discourse: Cognitive and social facets**. *Social and cognitive approaches to interpersonal communication*. PP. 91-111. UK.
- LAKOFF, G., & JOHNSON, M. 1980. **Metaphors we live by**. **University of Chicago Press**. Chicago, IL. USA.
- LEECH, G. 2016. **Principles of pragmatics**. Routledge. UK.

- LEVINSON, S. 1983. **Pragmatics** Cambridge University Press. Cambridge UK. UK.
- MCCARTHY, M., & CARTER, R. 2004. "There is millions of them: hyperbole in everyday conversation". **Journal of pragmatics**. Vol. 36, N° 2: 149-184. UK.
- SERT, O. 2008. **An Interactive Analysis of Hyperboles in a British TV Series: Implications For EFL Classes**. Online Submission. UK.
- SIRRIYYA, S. 2009. "AL-Jinās: Its English Counterparts and the Strategies Adopted in its Rendition". **Baghdad: Journal of Islamic University**. Vol. 6, N° 22: 396 -410. Iraq.



**UNIVERSIDAD
DEL ZULIA**

opción

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 36, Especial N° 26 (2020)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

Maracaibo - Venezuela

www.luz.edu.ve

www.serbi.luz.edu.ve

produccioncientifica.luz.edu.ve